

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
13 September 1966

State Department review
completed

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HIGHLIGHTS

There does not appear to be any chance in the near future for a real settlement between the Ky government and the militant wing of the Buddhist Institute. Other Buddhist Institute leaders, however, are clearly looking for a compromise settlement.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Light contact was reported on 12 September between US and Communist forces as American forces participating in Operation BYRD continued to search Binh Thuan Province for enemy troops (Para. 1). South Vietnamese forces killed 48 Viet Cong on the same day in Kien Phong Province (Para. 2). Also on 12 September five US battalions began Operation THAYER in northeastern Binh Dinh Province, where as many as 11,880 Communist troops are reported operating (Para. 3), and two US Army operations--KIPAPA and BANGOR--north and northwest of Saigon ended with a total of 13 Viet Cong killed (Paras. 4-5).

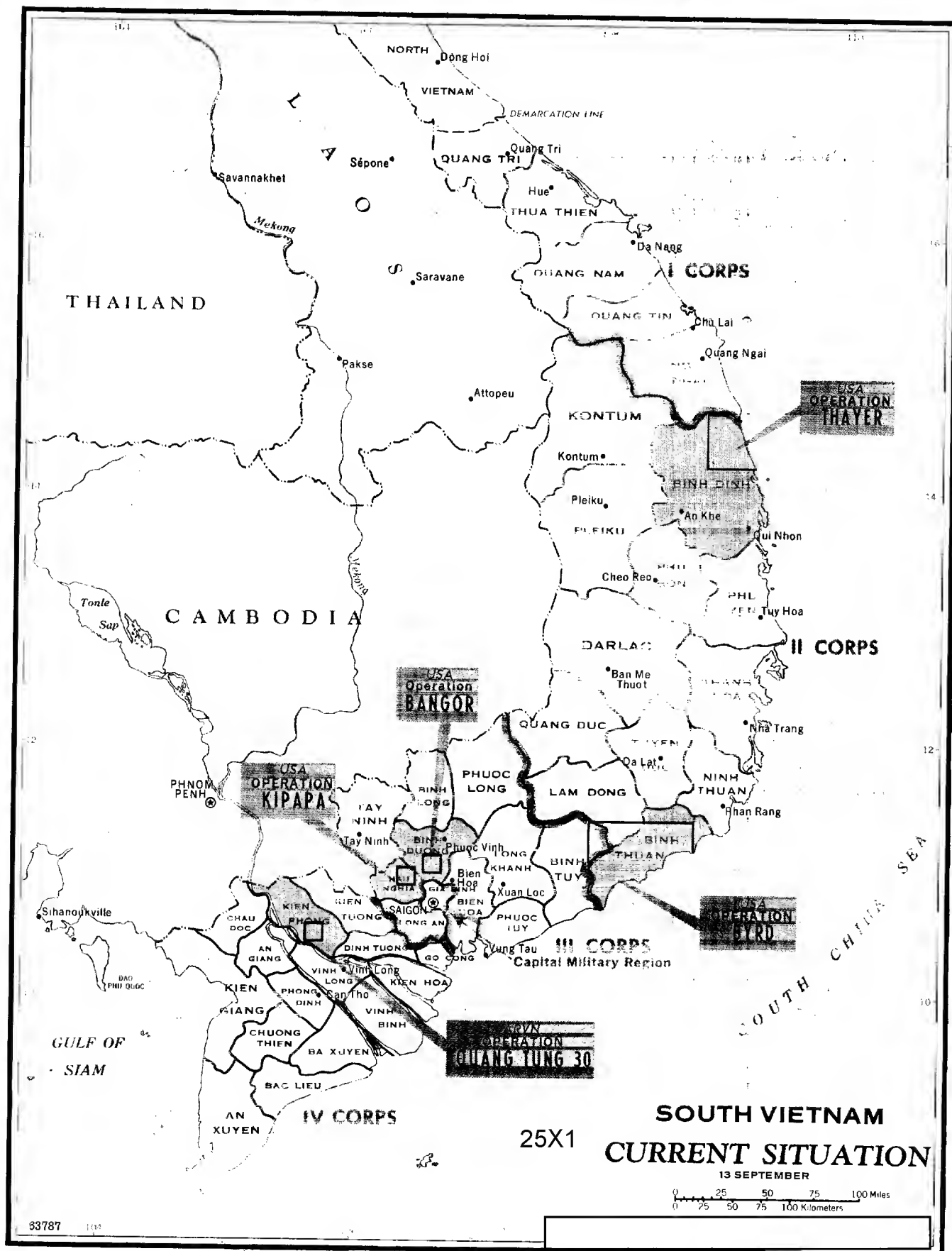
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
There does not appear to be any chance of a real settlement between the Buddhist Institute and the government in the near future (Paras. 1-2). The government is making plans for the phased return of FULRO supporters to government control (Para. 3). A demonstration, possibly Viet Cong - inspired with anti-election and anti-American overtones, was reported in the provincial capital of An Xuyen the evening of 13 September (Vietnam time) (Para. 4).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
Four US aircraft were lost over North Vietnam on 13 September as a near-record number of missions were flown against the DRV (Paras. 1-3).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing significant to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There
is nothing significant to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Light contact was reported on 12 September by US Army units participating in Operation BYRD in coastal Binh Thuan Province. There were no American casualties while 23 Viet Cong were reported to have been killed during the four-hour engagement. This search-and-destroy operation, which began on 25 August, has been seeking the 250-man 602nd Viet Cong Battalion, reported to be operating in Binh Thuan Province.

2. South Vietnamese forces supported by armed helicopters engaged a Communist force of unknown size on 12 September during the conduct of one-day Operation QUANG TUNG 30 in Kien Phong Province about 70 miles southwest of Saigon. In the ensuing battle 48 enemy soldiers were killed while friendly losses included one killed and two wounded.

3. Five battalions of the US 1st Cavalry Division began Operation THAYER on 12 September in northeastern Binh Dinh Province. This intensive search-and-destroy operation is attempting to locate and destroy Communist forces--including the 610th NVA/VC Division--believed to be operating in the area with an estimated strength of 11,880 men. There have been no reports of contact with the enemy.

4. The US search-and-destroy Operation KIPAPA, conducted by elements of the US 25th Infantry Division in an area of Hau Nghia Province about 24 miles northwest of Saigon, ended on 12 September. This operation began on 30 August with one battalion and was later expanded to three battalions with emphasis on locating and destroying enemy tunnels and fortifications. Final casualty figures show eight Americans killed and 20 wounded as compared with Viet Cong losses of nine killed and two captured.

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5. Operation BANGOR, a one-battalion search-and-destroy operation conducted by the 1st Infantry Division in Binh Duong Province about 18 miles north of Saigon also ended on 12 September. A total of 13 Americans were wounded as against four Viet Cong killed during the operation.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Although the election turnout has bolstered the prestige of the government vis-a-vis the militant wing of the Buddhist Institute, there is no sign that firm supporters of Tri Quang will cease their demands that Thieu and Ky step down. Other Institute leaders, however, are clearly looking for a compromise settlement. Moderate Institute chairman Tam Chau, who has been on leave of absence for some two months, is due to return to Saigon on 15 September to begin an active campaign to resume meaningful leadership of the Institute. An extraordinary congress of the Unified Buddhist Association to determine the Institute's future policy line will probably convene soon after Chau's return. US Embassy officers have commented, however, that Chau's chances of retaining his position are no better than even, with his chance of eliminating the dominant influence of Tri Quang on the Institute Council considerably less than even.

2. Various mediators between the Institute and the government have also been suggested, including the Peoples-Armed Forces Advisory Council, Catholic Archbishop of Saigon Nguyen Van Binh, and certain monks within the Institute. Institute moderates have indicated that they would probably be satisfied by the release of "struggle" prisoners and a conciliatory government statement. The government, however, does not seem to be particularly disposed to act quickly on the question of "struggle" prisoners, although it may decide to release at least some Buddhists in conjunction with the probable release of a number of Catholic prisoners held since the overthrow of the Diem regime.

Scheduled Return of FULRO Personnel to GVN Control

3. According to a government official involved in montagnard affairs, the government is now making plans to provide for the phased return of FULRO followers to government control. The first phase consists of organizing a group of FULRO followers now in hiding in Vietnam's central highlands. They will be flown to Pleiku late this month, to coincide with the arrival there of the first group of FULRO supporters from Cambodia. The second phase will take place in late October, when FULRO leader Y Bham Enoul will head a second group from Cambodia. The final phase will take place in December and will consist of the return of all FULRO personnel remaining in Cambodia.

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Anti-election Demonstration in the Delta

4. [redacted] nearly 600 demonstrators gathered before police headquarters in the capital of An Xuyen Province early the evening of 13 September (Vietnam time.) The group was peaceful, but appeared to be Viet Cong inspired, with anti-American and anti-election overtones. The ability of the police to handle the demonstration was somewhat in question, [redacted] The Viet Cong may well attempt to foster some type of election backlash as a means of regaining some of their lost prestige. [redacted] have alluded to the possibility of a step-up in Viet Cong terror as well.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Four aircraft were lost over the southern portion of North Vietnam on 13 September as a near-record number of missions were flown against the DRV. Most of the 170 missions, involving 406 US Navy and Air Force aircraft, were directed against POL facilities and lines of communication. Returning pilots also reported extensive damage to three SA-2 missile sites near Haiphong.

2. The first of the four planes lost was a US Navy A4C which crashed at night about 12 miles south of Thanh Hoa while attacking targets on Route 1A. The missing pilot's wingman reported that the flight was making low-level strafing runs with the aid of flares when the Skyhawk impacted the ground due to unknown causes. Later in the day the pilot of a Navy AlH was forced to bail out off the coast north of Vinh. The plane had been hit in the wing by AAA fire while attacking a coastal defense site near Dong Khe. The pilot was recovered in good condition.

3. An air force AlE made a wheels-up crash landing at Hue in South Vietnam after being hit by ground fire while bombing targets in the Demilitarized Zone. The aircraft sustained major damage but the pilot was uninjured. A USAF F-105D was lost near the Laos border after being hit by ground fire. The pilot was recovered in good condition except for an injured leg.

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